

DESERT QUEEN RANCH (Keys, William F.)  
Joshua Tree National Monument  
Twenty-nine Palms Vic.  
San Bernardino County  
California

HABS NO. CA-2347

HABS  
CAL  
36-TNPALV,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Building Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### DESERT QUEEN RANCH (William F. Keys Ranch)

HABS No. CA-2347

**Location:** Joshua Tree National Monument, Twentynine Palms vicinity, San Bernardino County, California. NE/4 NW1/4 S32, T1S, R7E

**Present Owner:** National Park Service; Joshua Tree National Monument.

**Present Occupant:** Unoccupied.

**Present Use:** Restoration of site; occasional summer tours.

**Significance:** The Desert Queen Ranch in the Joshua Tree National Monument is an outstanding historical site of desert-based vernacular technologies displaying a range of architectural and engineering artifacts associated with the Euro-American era of settlement in the Mojave desert. The site is largely intact, with nine buildings and four ore mills still surviving. The Desert Queen Ranch was active from 1894 to 1969, during which time fifteen roofed structures and five ore mills were built on the site.

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## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Desert Queen Ranch:

For almost sixty years the Desert Queen Ranch, also known as Keys Ranch, was the center for a network of social and economic relationships that extended throughout the southern California desert. These historic relationships, centered initially on cattle raising and later on mining endeavors, influenced the architecture at the ranch and related sites, such as Cow Camp Dam. The Desert Queen Ranch was of equal importance to the other population sites in the desert but after 1930 suffered a decline. Eventually it was surpassed by developments in the competing networks that eventually became the towns and cities of Twentynine Palms, Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree. Establishment of Joshua Tree National Monument, which incorporated not just William Keys' Desert Queen Ranch but large tracts of surrounding desert territory, insured the end of the development of the ranch once William Keys died.

The character of the interactive network centered at the Desert Queen Ranch was analyzed by Patricia Parker Hickman and is summarized below:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Patricia Parker Hickman, An Anthropological Evaluation of William Keys' Desert Queen Ranch, Joshua Tree National Monument, California (Tucson: Western Archeological Center, 1977).

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1. The Desert Queen Ranch was associated with the cattle importation industry, serving as a pasturage and resting location on a trail from Arizona and New Mexico to markets on the California coast.
2. Mining became the dominant activity at the Desert Queen Ranch at about the same time as the cattle industry made use of its pasturage. Keys became an important figure and his ranch an important node for associations among the mines in the area of the Monument. The Desert Queen Ranch was near the site of the Desert Queen Mine and during the 1920s the hub of Keys' interest in mining and prospecting. During World War II the mining industry collapsed and Keys began his now-famous activities of collecting abandoned materials from various mine sites and storing them at his ranch.
3. The era after World War I, along with the Great Depression, brought an increase in homesteading and a return to interest in mining. This meant a dramatic increase in population, especially in the Twentynine Palms area and in the desert by those wanting to take advantage in the increase of gold prices. Keys' ranch became a milling center again, as well as providing goods and services to the new miners and their families.
4. Because of the shooting incident with Bagely, Keys spent most of World War II in prison. But upon his return to the ranch in 1948 he was interested in developing a tourist-oriented business focused especially on the younger towns of Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree, but not with Twentynine Palms with which he had an antagonistic relationship.

Keys continued to improve his property until his death in 1969 by building dams and working in the mines.

**B. William Keys:**

George Barth was born September 27, 1879, in Palisade, Nebraska, on Stinking River Creek where it met the Frenchman River. His relationship with his father was very strained and at the age of 15 George Barth left home, returning only once during the rest of his life. When Barth was still living in Nebraska, he returned from riding with his horse limping and sweating. His father made him shoot his own horse. The forced killing of his horse made him bitter against his family, and he packed up and left home immediately.<sup>2</sup>

As a youth George Barth worked in Colorado as a miner and elsewhere as a ranch hand. In spring 1898 he moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where he worked for the C. W. Wimmel cattle

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<sup>2</sup>Phyllis Keys Meidell, daughter of William and Frances Keys, interviewed by Richard Vidutis in Hesperia, CA, August 24-25, 1993, tape 1B.

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ranch and later moved on to Prescott and Jerome where he hired out in copper mines and at smelters.<sup>3</sup> At this time George Barth attempted to join Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders and changed his name to William Franklin Key. In 1921, while already established on the Desert Queen Ranch, he added an "s" to the last name to distinguish himself from Johnny Kee of Morango Basin, whose last name was pronounced the same as Key. Kee and Key were getting their mail mixed up, prompting Bill Key to adjust his last name. Barth may have chosen his new surname "Key" in deference to a ranch owner for whom he may have worked during his journeys as a youth.<sup>4</sup>

About 1900 William Keys worked for the George Briggs cattle ranch near Needles, California, as a cowhand. The cowboys employed with Keys were Indians of the Walapi tribe. A number of legends about Keys stemming from this period have him learning the Walapi language, others state that he was a full-blooded Cherokee, and still others that he was a half-breed Choctaw along with other breeds mixed in.<sup>5</sup> According to his own writings, Bill Keys learned about the events at Custer's Last Stand from the Indians who defeated Custer.<sup>6</sup>

From the Briggs ranch Keys went to Kingman, Arizona, to work for the Conrad-Knight Cattle Company in 1901-02. During his stay there he served as a deputy sheriff with Henry Loven of Mojave County and on occasion hunted outlaws along the Utah-Arizona border.<sup>7</sup>

Keys went to work at the Gold Roads Mine near Kingman, where he worked for about a year, relatively successfully. Keys, along with five other men, developed a small silver mine in Manville. Wanting to get another stake, they went to work at the Keystone Mine and generally were prospecting and mining from the Colorado River on the south to Death Valley to the north, developing several profitable claims. It was there that Keys met and became friends with Walter "Death Valley Scotty" Scott and participated in an abortive swindle which culminated in the famous "Battle of Wingate Pass."<sup>8</sup>

Following the Wingate Pass incident, for which Keys spent twenty-seven days in prison, Keys went to Los Angeles and later to Massachusetts, where he sold his claims to a newly formed Key Gold Mining Company owned by DuPont manufacturing.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ross Holland, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Keys Desert Queen Ranch," 1975.

<sup>4</sup>Willis Keys, personal communication.

<sup>5</sup>Patricia Keys Garry, daughter of William and Frances Keys, interviewed October 4, 1956, Archives at Joshua Tree National Monument, hereafter JOTR.

<sup>6</sup>Handwritten note by Bill Keys, JOTR.

<sup>7</sup>Garry interview, October 4, 1956.

<sup>8</sup>Garry interview, October 4, 1956.

<sup>9</sup>Garry interview, October 12, 1956.

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From 1907 William Keys travelled extensively, looking for workable gold claims in Goldfield, Death Valley (where he stayed at the new "castle" constructed by Albert Johnson and Walter Scott), the Redrock Canyon Placer Mining District, and through the Sierra Nevada counties. The summer of 1908 took Keys by way of Madera, through Stockton, Sacramento, Grass Valley, Nevada City, Weber Lake, Hobart Mills, to Reno, Virginia City, Carson City, Bodie, Yerrington, and Sherz, visiting mines and mills. He finally headed south again through Bishop and Owens Valley back to Redrock, California.<sup>10</sup>

Keys came to the area of Twentynine Palms in 1910 and hired on as a cowboy at Sunrise Springs. A year later he moved to the area of Joshua Tree National Monument where he worked the Tully Mine and milled his ore in Twentynine Palms. The value of the ore was said to run \$100 a ton, but the pocket soon ran out.<sup>11</sup>

At that point Keys hired on at the Desert Queen mine as a watchman and did assessment work for William Morgan, the owner, until 1912 when Morgan died. The manager offered the mine and millsite to Keys in payment for his back wages. All Keys had to do was locate the property. Initially, Keys located the five acres at the millsite and about seven claims at the mine. The millsite was the ranch where the McHaney brothers had cattle in 1894. Keys then decided he liked the property and homesteaded it by taking 160 acres. Later he took up two stock-grazing parcels of 40 acres each.<sup>12</sup> Eventually Keys owned 1,080 acres and held more than thirty mining claims.<sup>13</sup>

The Desert Queen Ranch site is where the original Cow Camp was, an area rich in water and known by generations of inhabitants, as witnessed by thick middens along the road signifying ancient Indian occupation. Later the Cow Camp was moved to the valley floor where Keys built a concrete dam.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning in about 1912 Keys started to construct the simple wood-frame shacks that would subsequently make up the Desert Queen Ranch. On October 8, 1918, Keys married Frances Mae Lawton.<sup>15</sup> Frances Lawton was born in Ohio and had lived in Canada and in California where she eventually met Keys. The couple had seven children; three died on the ranch and

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<sup>10</sup>Garry interview, October 25, 1956.

<sup>11</sup>Helen Bagley, Sand in My Shoe: Homestead Days in Twentynine Palms (Twentynine Palms, California: Calico Press, 1978), 217.

<sup>12</sup>Willis Keys, son of William and Frances Keys, interviewed by Richard Vidutis July 8-9, 1993, at Joshua Tree National Monument, and July 16-18, 1993, in North Fork, CA, tape 3B.

<sup>13</sup>Edwards, undated.

<sup>14</sup>Edwards, undated.

<sup>15</sup>Born September 34, 1887, in Toledo, Ohio, died January 8, 1963, in Banning, California.

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are buried there.<sup>16</sup> To educate his children, Keys built a school and schoolteacher's house on the ranch. The county Board of Supervisors declared it an "emergency school" and funded at least part of the cost of the teacher and supplies. One such teacher was Mrs. Howard Dudley, who had been a missionary in Burma for thirty years. She lived on the ranch with her husband. Keys' two youngest children and four from neighboring homesteads attended the school. Sometimes the children of miners' families attended.<sup>17</sup>

In 1943 Keys was sent to San Quentin, convicted of manslaughter for the killing of Worth Bagley. In prison he made use of the library to educate himself. Through the efforts of Erle Stanley Gardner, William Keys was paroled on February 28, 1950, and pardoned on July 26, 1956.

Frances Keys died on January 9, 1963. William Keys died June 28, 1969, two months short of his 90th birthday.

Keys built a number of structures at the Desert Queen Ranch, which as a complex reflects the self-reliance of the Keys family. Cattle ranching and mining and milling represent attempts to produce income, and subsistence efforts are seen in the fences and buildings for animals, the gardens and orchards, and the dams and tunnels to manage water. The number of residential cabins at the site indicates a fluid population of friends, family, and tourists. HABS has documented eight buildings at the Desert Queen Ranch in separate reports.

- C. **Cattle Ranching:** According to an interview with Keys by Joshua Tree Monument Superintendent King in 1954, the first man to bring cattle into the territory of the Monument was Oliver Smith, who brought them into the Quail Springs area in 1870 and stayed in the business until 1876. Bill McHaney, the original inhabitant of the Desert Queen ranch property, started running cattle in the area in 1879. The cattle were Longhorns and ranged over Queen and Lost Horse Valleys when he quit the ranch in 1894. In that year George Meyers bought the cattle interests from McHaney and remained in the area until 1905 when C. O. Barker bought the business and continued cattle ranging into the late 1920s. Barker's herd was later merged with that of Mr. Shay who ran cattle in the Monument area until about 1940. The firm of Carpenter and Hamilton ran cattle in the area of Stubby Springs from 1896 until 1899 when they sold their stock to J. D. Ryan, the same man who later developed the Lost Horse Mine.

Keys was not a rancher, although he did have a few head of cattle occasionally. In the early years Keys ranged a few cattle in the area of the other water source close to his property where the present Cow Camp is. He built a dam there and wells for his cattle but large cattle companies such as Shay and Barker would run 300 to 400 head even in the winter, causing

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<sup>16</sup>The children are: William F. Keys, Jr. (1919-1919 [five days]); Willis Keys (b. January 5, 1921); David Keys (1924-1924 [five days]); Virginia Keys (b. 1925); Elsworth Keys (1926-1937); Patricia Keys (b. October 18, 1929); and Phyllis Keys (b. October 3, 1931). Art Kidwell, "Family Group Record (Keys' Family Genealogy)," 1993.

<sup>17</sup>Bagley, 218.

damage to Keys' fences and putting a heavy strain on the water supply. Often Keys' cattle were mixed and driven to market with those of other companies, who found Keys' presence in the area to be an irritation. The developing bad blood eventually erupted in a shoot-out with Keys wounding a supposed gunman hired to get rid of Keys. Keys was found to have acted in self-defense. This incident established Keys' reputation as that of a fighter, although he was also known as a friendly and helpful man.

**D. Mining and Milling:**

1. **The Desert Queen Mine and Millsite:** In 1893 A. James discovered a rich quartz outcropping approximately a mile south of Pine Springs. He was killed in Hidden Valley after he showed four cowboys (two of whom were the McHaney brothers) the quartz gold vein he had found. In about 1894, the McHaney brothers traced the float that James had found; this was the beginning of the Desert Queen Mine.<sup>18</sup>

The Zambro Bank ran the Desert Queen Mine for a time. Bill McHaney supposedly spent his half-share of an initial profit of \$27,000 from the mine on a drunken spree and "ten diamond rings and a diamond stick pin for his hat." Having thus spent the mine's operating money, he was forced to take a \$6,000 loan from the bank, which in turn took controlling interest in the Desert Queen by buying out McHaney. The bank built a five-stamp mill on the property, installed a supervisor and took charge of all the bank's interests within the limits of the claims.<sup>19</sup>

In 1910, William Morgan of Pasadena, a man in his eighties, bought the mine from the bank. Bill Keys worked at the mine for three years and later took over as assayer until 1917. During this time Morgan died and his wife left the country. Keys was owed back wages figured at a rate of \$700 per year, and through Morgan's attorney a property-wage settlement was agreed on. In this manner William Keys became the owner of the Desert Queen Mine property in 1917.<sup>20</sup>

The Desert Queen millsite--the Desert Queen Ranch--is located 6 miles from the mine and at the time Keys acquired it contained five acres, a five-stamp crushing mill, an adobe barn and several other adobe buildings dating back to the 1890s when the McHaney brothers owned the land and used it for cattle ranching. In 1916 Bill Keys filed for eighty acres on the land as a homestead.<sup>21</sup>

2. **The Wall Street Mill:** In 1930 Keys hauled a two-stamp mill by wagon from Pinyon Wells and set it up on the site he named Wall Street. Each stamp weighed more than

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<sup>18</sup>Fact File #02903-4, JOTR.

<sup>19</sup>Fact File #02905, JOTR.

<sup>20</sup>Fact File #02906-7, JOTR.

<sup>21</sup>Art Kidwell, Ambush: The Story of Bill Keys (Fresno, California: Pioneer Publishing Co., 1979), 10.

one thousand pounds. The mill processed ore from Keys' own Desert Queen Mine, as well as from other mines in the area. He charged \$5 per ton for the service of crushing the ore. It was not uncommon for the stamp mill to run non-stop, night and day. During these times Keys was helped by friends, relatives and the miners themselves to run the machines.<sup>22</sup> For an in-depth study, see Lysa Wegman-French's HAER report of the Wall Street Mill, 1991 (HAER No. CA-110).

## **PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

The Desert Queen Ranch has fence and wall boundaries producing a citadel-like agricultural site that has been modified by American cultural and technological requirements in California's southern desert regions. The enclosed core area--the house complex in the northeast section of the citadel, animal pens and corrals to the south of the house, an orchard east of the house with a garden south of the orchard--constitute a human-animal-crop interaction system logically distributed across the landscape. These systems of life support sustained Keys and his family in the harsh desert environment for sixty years. The enclosed site sits in the middle of a horseshoe canyon, the walls of which add to the physical security of the core area. The land between the core area and the walls of mountain boulders has been used by Keys for other support purposes: the area west of the house was used to store materials and equipment scavenged from abandoned mining and homestead sites throughout the surrounding desert; an industrial strip cut through the southern tip of the core area contained his ore-processing mills, assay offices in caves, and ore tailings; and in the north, east, and northeast hills, Keys created an intricate system of dams along with retaining and diversion walls to direct water through a wash and also to accumulate in a lake reservoir without which the survival of his family would have been impossible.

### **A. Structures no longer standing:**

- I. Adohes:** Keys lived in one of the adobes when he first got to the ranch. At that time the only structures on the site were the adobe barn and two adobe cabins and an ore mill.<sup>23</sup>

The two adobe cabins were built by the McHaneys east of the adobe barn. In about 1914 Keys took down the adobe cabins in order to clear the land, so that he could extend the orchard southward. In the 1930s Keys put up the adobe walls by the

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<sup>22</sup>Kidwell, 4-5.

<sup>23</sup>Keys, tape 3B.



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Chilean mill across the wash but never got around to putting on a roof. Consequently, the adobe bricks melted down over the years. Willis Keys does not remember the house being built for any particular person.<sup>24</sup>

The adobe barn had two wings, with evidence of one in the remnants of a few bricks of the adobe melt. The main part of the barn in the remaining days of its life was used for hay storage. The two sides, or lean-tos, were for animals. Mangers were along the main wall and windows in the main part of the barn were used to dump hay out to the animals in the two wings. Several animals were put in each wing. In later years one of the side walls collapsed but the end walls stood. It then became a cows' area where they roamed, were fed and were milked.<sup>25</sup>

The adobe barn was used for hay, feed, grain, and chickens. The south-side lean-to held a pig in the earlier years. Goats were kept in pens in the lean-to and were milked on a stanchion with their heads being held by a V-shaped vise, preventing them from escaping. Only in the very early days were cows brought into the barn to be kept and milked, explaining the mangers.<sup>26</sup>

2. **Pig pen:** The pig pen was outside the fence at the southern end of the orchard by the poplar trees.<sup>27</sup>
3. **Kiln:** William Keys also made bricks on the ranch. There was a brick kiln outside the west fence on the slight rise in the road.<sup>28</sup>

**B. Extant structures at the Keys Ranch not elsewhere documented by HABS:**

1. **Cabins:** The collapsed cabin across the road from the corral started out as a tent cabin. At one time the Keys rented out the cabins (a total of four) but business was very spotty. People came from all over, such as the Kelley family from Portland, Oregon, who would come and spend a month at the ranch living in their own tent. When the canvas of the tent cabins deteriorated, Keys covered the cabins with sheet metal.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Keys, tapes 2A and 3B.

<sup>25</sup>Keys, tape 4A.

<sup>26</sup>Phyllis Keys Meidell, daughter of William and Frances Keys, interviewed by Richard Vidutis on August 24-25, 1993, in Hesperia, CA, tape 4B.

<sup>27</sup>Meidell, tape 8A.

<sup>28</sup>Keys, tape 2B.

<sup>29</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

McHaney lived at his Barker Dam cabin until he got too old to be there alone, becoming almost blind and feeble. At that point Keys invited him to come and live at the ranch. Keys had to reconstruct a tent cabin so that it was livable, and even put in a new wood floor before McHaney came to stay there. He also installed an intercom to connect it to the house. The children went there to visit McHaney and Phyllis Keys read him stories often. The Keyeses took meals to him three times a day because he couldn't cook.<sup>30</sup>

There used to be another tent cabin almost next to the west canyon wall in the salvage yard, in the area where an old tank sits now.<sup>31</sup>

2. **Poultry coop/dog house/rabbit hutch:** Willis Keys maintains that the fenced-in area, which also encloses a car, used to contain rabbits and birds, possibly pheasants and/or chuckers. That is why Keys ran a water pipeline out to that area. Phyllis Keys, however, states that it never was a chicken coop, but rather a shelter for a stray pregnant dog that Keys took in so it could have its puppies. This occurred probably during his later years, maybe after Frances Keys had died, just before Keys went to the hospital.<sup>32</sup>
3. **Timber hopper:** The hopper at the northern end of the machine shop was erected in the late 1950s. Directly below it is a shaft (15' to 20' deep) from which Keys dug clay to put in the open-top hopper to make adobe brick. He even acquired adobe brick-making machinery, now lying next to it, but never used it very much. Keys did not make very many adobe bricks, even by hand.<sup>33</sup>
4. **Elevated water tanks:** The structure at the northern end of the machine shop was erected in the late 1950s and holds a metal water tank. During that era Keys did a considerable amount of piping on the ranch, extending the system in a number of places such as to the adobe structure and probably to the wire-enclosed hut used as a dog pen.<sup>34</sup>
5. **Peripheral shelters:** The assay caves among the boulders southwest of and across the road from the corrals held Keys' assaying equipment, including chemicals and a furnace.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Meidell, tapes 7A and 3B.

<sup>31</sup>Keys, tape 5A.

<sup>32</sup>Keys, tape 2A, and Meidell, tape 4B.

<sup>33</sup>Keys, tape 5A.

<sup>34</sup>Keys, tape 5A.

<sup>35</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

C. Corrals and fences:

1. **Corrals:** When Keys originally acquired the land, the old adobe barn built by the McHaneys did not have a corral next to it, just a couple of fenced-in places. Keys built a circular corral out of willow poles and cable, adjoining the back of the barn. In the early 1930s when Keys was breaking a lot of mules and horses, two more corrals were built.<sup>36</sup>

The corral area was divided into three smaller sections. Animals were kept separated, depending on what degree of being broken each animal was. As more animals were brought to the ranch more space was needed and more corrals were built.<sup>37</sup>

The main corral is the one with the willow fence. It had a stall built in it to harness the wild animals. The stall consisted of a backboard which butted right up to the barn. There was a pole hinged at one end and hung from a chain at the other. An animal was forced in there, snubbed up to the front end. The pole was pushed up against the animal and a rope put around the back. The animal was then pushed right up against wall. At that point the animal could be handled. It would be fed, and reassured by patting as a little bit of harness was slowly put on it.<sup>38</sup>

In old photographs there is a small triangular corral area attached to the small circular corral--the southwesternmost addition. Phyllis Keys remembers her father planting corn there in later years.<sup>39</sup>

2. **Fences:** In the early 1950s when Keys came back from prison he decided to use a lot of old joshua tree trunks he had on the ranch. He hauled numerous loads with the jeep and the trailer. From the trunks he built the joshua tree fence by the house which had originally been a willow pole and stock wire or barb wire fence.<sup>40</sup>

At one time there was a fence where the stone wall is now by the wash along the orchard. It was put in to keep goats and other animals out of the garden and orchard area. The fence running north-south at the southern end of the garden--midway between the wash and the joshua tree fence--was probably put in later by the

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<sup>36</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

<sup>37</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

<sup>38</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

<sup>39</sup>Meidell, tape 8A.

<sup>40</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

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Monument. That area was an open field which had a milk house and occasionally one of the goats or some other animal.<sup>41</sup>

- D. **Gardens and the orchard:** Fruits and vegetables from the garden and orchard were canned in amounts to provide the whole family with food for the entire winter.<sup>42</sup>

The soil of the orchard/garden was fertilized with manure from horses, cattle and burros. Just below the surface is clay. In later years Keys hauled in a lake-bed sediment and added it to the soil. Besides adding nutrients, the sediment also helped loosen the earth.<sup>43</sup>

There was grass growing around the house, as seen in one photograph of people sitting on the grassy ground by the east side of the house.<sup>44</sup>

Lake water was piped to the orchard and garden. Faucets were supplied through several different outlets. Sometimes Keys would add a hose to the faucet to take water to other areas of the garden. Water was so controlled that it would come out of the faucet and go down rows in specific areas. The raised rows were planted on both sides. Keys would irrigate only certain sections at a time--when one area was saturated he would switch the water to another area. Otherwise if the water were left in one area too long it would only be absorbed down into the ground.<sup>45</sup>

1. **Gardens:** South of the core area of the ranch complex, south of the South House, along a canyon wall there was an area that held one of Keys' gardens. There is a little cave in the surrounding boulders and the garden area used to be fenced in. It was placed down there because of the good soil and the fact that there was not enough room by the house where the orchard predominated. The fenced-in garden had water piped in all the way down from the house complex. The garden, about one-half acre, was in existence for quite a few years. The varieties of vegetables raised were corn, string beans, tomatoes, melons, etc. In the evenings the whole family would drive down there to do weeding and to pack vegetables back. Sometimes the back seat of a car would be loaded with garden produce and driven back to the house.<sup>46</sup>

There was a cactus garden of about 500 beavertail cactus, barrel cactus, engelmännii cactus, fishhook cactus, and other types. A man from Pasadena who had a cactus

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<sup>41</sup>Keys, tape 4A.

<sup>42</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

<sup>43</sup>Keys, tape 3B.

<sup>44</sup>Meidell, tape 2A.

<sup>45</sup>Meidell, tape 2B.

<sup>46</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

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garden would come to the desert to study them. William Keys became interested in them also and planted cactus, which he gathered from around the desert, by the house where they existed for many years. Keys sold quite a few to the man who wanted them. The cactus garden died out when water became scarce and too precious to use for cactus.<sup>47</sup>

2. **Orchard:** Varieties of fruit grown at the ranch included several kinds of apples, pears, apricots, several types of peaches, crab apples, sickle pears, and plums, but very few berries, except for strawberries. East of the tank there was a big almond tree that was a favorite place to seek shade in the summer and to have picnics. The almond tree eventually dried up.<sup>48</sup>

Originally there were fruit trees in the plowed area east of the fence, along which tables with rocks stand now. At one time when they were not doing well, Keys took all of the fruit trees out and put up a grape arbor. The grape arbor was constructed from poplar trees which grew years ago along the wash. There were about a dozen poplars. One day Keys decided that the poplars were sapping the water and nutrients from the orchard, so he cut them down. But he saved the wood and made the grape arbor out of poplar poles. The grape arbor eventually collapsed because poplar wood is not very durable.<sup>49</sup>

In the area south of the orchard along the wash, vegetables grew: corn, potatoes, melons (by the well), rows of string beans on poles, cucumbers, and squash. Seeds were bought from seed catalogues. One photograph shows long raised beds for planting, between which ran water from a pipe system.<sup>50</sup>

Originally, the area below the dam, before it was washed out, was all level ground all the way across. Today there is a deep gorge which resulted from the old earthen dam bursting in the early 1930s. On the right side Keys had set in a patch of strawberries. There was a little bit of seepage which came through the dirt levy and kept the ground damp. It proved to be a very good place for strawberries.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Keys, tape 4B.

<sup>48</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>49</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>50</sup>Meidell, tape 2B.

<sup>51</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

- E. **Food production:** Items not made at the ranch but always purchased at the store were flour, salt and pepper, sugar, seasonings, and fruits such as grapefruit and oranges. The Keyeses had their own milk, usually from one milk cow and several milk goats.<sup>52</sup>

The cellars that were washed away when the dam broke contained a meat locker--a big old wooden box lined with metal and with a heavy lid. It would hold a whole beef cut up. Keys and Willis would butcher the beef and cut it into quarters and let it hang. Usually butchering would take place just about dark when there were no flies around. Willis would hold the lantern for his father while he would skin it down and cut it in quarters. Then the meat was taken to a pole between a couple of trees with the meat hooks on it. The meat would hang until the next day. Before any flies appeared, early in the morning, the meat was taken to the cellar and put in the meat locker. A big canvas was placed over the top of the locker. At night the meat had to be taken out and hung again. The next morning the meat had to be placed in the locker again. This routine continued every day as long as there was meat. The procedure could be practiced in colder weather, but in the summer time a whole beef would not last, and some of it was given away or sold. In the summer, meat could be kept for about a month and a half before it had to be canned. In the winter there were rarely any problems in keeping the meat before it was completely consumed. During the nightly exposure to the outside air the meat would get a very thick crust, which was practically as hard as rock, and it could hardly be cut. Sometimes Keys would take half an animal to Indio to trade for groceries. The meat had to be watched. When the time came, Keys would say, "Well, it's time to do the canning." The meat was then cut up and canned in fruit jars.<sup>53</sup>

Phyllis remembers that the whole family helped with the butchering of cattle and canning of meat. Frances Keys did the cutting and cleaning of the meat. Later, when there were no cattle, there were goats and goat meat and goat jerky.<sup>54</sup>

Pigs were raised at the ranch in later years, not while Willis was there.<sup>55</sup>

The lake was stocked with fish, originally with black bass and during later years, with bluegill. The fish survived for years in the lake, as long as it had water in it.<sup>56</sup>

During Willis' time at the ranch a few rabbits were raised, but at that time it was easier to go hunting for rabbits than raise them in the desert.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>53</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>54</sup>Meidell, tape 3B.

<sup>55</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>56</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>57</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

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Other animals raised at the ranch were chickens, guinea hens, peking ducks, a cat or two, and once in a while, a dog. Willis remembers his father buying 5,000 angora goats. There was just one shearing of wool. The wool was mixed with cholla cactus needles and no one would buy the wool. In less than a year the goats were dispensed with. There were also regular goats at the ranch, anywhere from a couple to a dozen. The goats would roam the mountains and would take care of themselves but occasionally would get into the orchard and start eating the fruit trees. At that point Keys would get rid of them, but later would get some more.<sup>58</sup>

There were at one time 112 head of cattle at the ranch. Because the range gets eaten out, the cattle were run in the high desert part of the Monument in Lost Horse Valley, Desert Queen Valley, up towards Keys View, and back towards the ranch. In the winter the cattle would be run into Pleasant Valley to use the water from Pinon Well. Hidden Valley was opened by Keys and Willis' uncle, who blasted through rock to open it up for a cattle trail.<sup>59</sup>

Usually there were about two horses and a couple of hurros at the ranch. One person on a horse was sufficient to take care of all the cattle. Willis and his sister Virginia would shepherd the cattle, a task that required dawn-to-dusk attention.<sup>60</sup>

Bottles were always saved because they were scarce and could be used to hold almost anything. Most of those bottles were probably kept by Frances Keys who would not throw anything away. Gallon jugs were wrapped with burlap, sewn up, and used as canteens for transporting cool water.<sup>61</sup>

The Keyeses would occasionally make their own beer, using brown bottles and a capper. There were large crocks that were used for the brew, as well as smaller ones. The 7- to 8-gallon size was used to hold corned beef, which was then stored in the long shed on the bench. It would take a month or so to cure, after which it was ready to consume.<sup>62</sup>

Mr. Keys made what he called "head cheese" from the head of a steer, which has a lot of meat on it. Keys removed the brains and eyes, stuffed the cavity with onions and garlic, salt and pepper, wrapped it up and cooked it in a pit barbecue. He would eat it but Frances Keys refused.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>59</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>60</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>61</sup>Keys, tape 4B.

<sup>62</sup>Keys, tape 4B.

<sup>63</sup>Meidell, tape 3B.

Almost every night the family would drive out into the fields to feed the animals and milk them. At the peak of milking season, three or four cows were milked.<sup>64</sup>

Keys would trade animals with an Indian family and with two old Swedish men who lived in Pipes Canyon.<sup>65</sup>

**F. Water management:**

1. **Dams:** Keys built dams and had planned to build more because he liked to work with rock and he also appreciated the need for conservation of water, which is an important resource in the desert.

Before Keys came to the Desert Queen Ranch there were a few wells but no dams. Keys eventually built all the dams--earthen and concrete--without any advice from professionals. He built the first dam at the ranch with the help of someone named Thompson. Whether Thompson was experienced in dam-building is not known. But together they did a very good job shaping the dam to give it strength to hold the water back.<sup>66</sup>

- a. **The dams at the ranch:** The spot picked for the main dam across the orchard was an ideal position between the rocks--the bed rock was there and the side walls were fairly close, requiring fewer materials to build it. The main drainage of the surrounding hills took place through the low area now made into a lake. There may have been natural tanks along that area before the lake was created. When that water level is down the original earthen dam can be seen.<sup>67</sup>

Originally, west of the concrete dam that exists today there was an earthen dam built in 1914 or 1915. Keys took a couple of mules and scraped the dirt where it was mostly clay and made an earthen dam probably 6' deep or more. He planted some willows or poplars and cottonwoods on it, which provided shade and a swimming hole behind it. But he also had some goats which used to go up the slope of the dam and eventually wore down a trail over the top of it, perhaps 1' or 2' deep. One summer following a big cloudburst, water filled up behind the dam 3' or 4' high and started to run over the place worn out by the goats, cutting out quite a ditch. The running water started washing out a canyon down towards the wash along the orchard. Keys threw sand bags and whatever to contain the dam. It held for a year or two but another

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<sup>64</sup>Meidell, tape 4B.

<sup>65</sup> Meidell, tape 4B.

<sup>66</sup>Keys, tape 6A.

<sup>67</sup>Keys, tape 1B.



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big storm finally washed out the earthen dam in 1931. There were a couple of deep tunnels used as food cellars dug into the coolness of the dirt bank in the way of the eroding gorge where canned goods and home-canned food were stored. All of that was washed out without any trace left today. That is why glass can be found for great distances along the wash today.<sup>68</sup>

Keys started the concrete dam around 1936 but the work went slowly. He laid it up with rock, making it 4' wide at the bottom or better. Keys laid it up piece by piece, section by section, with a cement rock wall back and front, and then filled it in with concrete and rock in the center. At a certain point he decided to form it with poured concrete. Consequently, the first part, probably 4' or 5', was done in the 1930s and then Keys stopped for quite a while. That meant that the lake never did fill up completely and would run over by the main dam. When Keys returned in 1950 from San Quentin, that was one of his big projects which he started on right away and finished.<sup>69</sup>

Some of the other dams did not have the same shape as the dams at the ranch but in those he incorporated existing rocks as, for example, at the Barker Dam and the dam at Cow Camp. A professional dam builder would probably have blasted out the boulders that were in the way. Willis Keys occasionally helped his dad at Cow Camp by pouring the base of the dam.<sup>70</sup>

During the heyday of the ranch the lake created behind the dam never went dry. Every year there would be at least 1', maybe even 2', of snow that could be counted on to help fill the lake. The most amount of snow Willis ever saw was in 1948 when 4' of snow fell. The temperature was below zero and the lake froze 2' deep. In the last twenty to thirty years a dry period has set in at the ranch and the desert.<sup>71</sup>

The little wall that cuts across the wash and the high wall jutting from the boulders immediately north of the house were to be part of a new dam, which was to create a lake north of the house. The wall also was to prevent water rushing in and washing away the whole orchard. Through the years flash floods would come down the wash and erode parts of the orchard. Keys had trees--poplars and a few cottonwoods--planted on the edge of the wash in order to keep the erosion back. Eventually he decided the poplars and cottonwoods were consuming too much water and nutrients from his orchard so he cut them all down. That was when Keys decided on building a wall

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<sup>68</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>69</sup>Keys, tape 6A.

<sup>70</sup>Keys, tape 6A.

<sup>71</sup>Keys, tapes 1A and 1B.

along the wash to keep the erosion back, and he also needed some rock work to do so that was a good project. When he built the wall he extended it out into the wash a little farther and gained a little ground by filling in behind it.<sup>72</sup>

- b. **Cow Camp Dam:** The area extending beyond the lake created by the dam was a narrow valley where good feed could be found, mainly because of the rocks and the seepage among them. It kept dampness way after any other area out there had dried out in the desert in the summer time.<sup>73</sup>

When the Barkers and the Shays had Cow Camp there was only a little dam down below where the dam is now. A little wash runs down between a big rock hill and a little rock knoll, with the canyon between them. There they built a little dam about 6' or 7' high, creating a small pond for water storage besides the well.<sup>74</sup>

Keys built his dam at Cow Camp higher. Farther up the canyon there was a good place for a dam where a lot more water storage could be developed then there would have been at the pond down below.<sup>75</sup>

- c. **Barker Dam:** Keys rebuilt the Barker Dam. There were several dams at the old Barker place. The original dam can still be seen when the lake is down behind it. It looks like dry-laid rock. It was a dam that was probably originally 4' to 6' high. George Myer, one of the McHaney cowboys, built the early Barker Dam. Later, Barker and Shay built the next one down below it but it leaked from the start and could not hold water very long. Keys used it for watering his cattle quite a bit. Eventually Keys acquired the land out in front of it, and on the side where the trail comes in, making it land-locked. It was considered a public water hole for many years but Keys cut off access to it anyway. He decided to rebuild the dam. He went inside the dam and dug down to bedrock and started a new dam up against the old dam and raised it a little bit higher then the old one was.<sup>76</sup>

2. **Wells:** South of the corral area close to the adobe cabins was one of the first wells on the site dug by the McHaney brothers. When the five-stamp mill was built across the

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<sup>72</sup>Keys, tape 6B.

<sup>73</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>74</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>75</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>76</sup>Keys, tape 6A.

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wash from the vegetable field, a well was dug to supply water to the stamp mill. The shallow hole can be seen today next to the arrastra.<sup>77</sup>

The well in the middle of the orchard was the one into which the mule fell. From it a tunnel built by the McHaney brothers ran all the way across underneath the wash. Keys filled in the well and leveled it when he abandoned it for the new well farther south in the orchard.

The windmill over the well farther south in the orchard was erected in later years; water was also pumped by a gasoline engine. Originally the water was pumped to supply the orchard area. It may have taken an hour to pump the well dry using a 2" pump, and overnight it would fill up again. Willis and his father started a small tunnel under the orchard in conjunction with the new well. The well is 18' to 20' deep. The bottom of the well was on bedrock and the rock was probably dug a bit to create a basin for the water. There was a tank tower with two tanks on it (about the size of the one on the tower now at the north end of the machine shed) located south of where the machine shop is now. Later a pipeline was put in to pump water to the house.<sup>78</sup>

The wooden platform below the well head was used to hold the pump. The pump's limit was about 20'. Putting it on the platform added about 3' to the sucking capacity of the pump. The engine was outside by the pump and entered through the side door opening of the concrete well housing. The lowered platform was not used for food storage. For that a burlap sack was used to hold the items (watermelon, beer); it was attached to a windlass and lowered into the water. The old windlass, which used to sit over the well, is the same windlass that killed Keys' son Elsworth. The bucket on the windlass was a big metal one which held 15 to 20 gallons of water.<sup>79</sup>

The bamboo around the well by the house was regularly watered by Frances Keys with dirty dishwater. The old well was 14' to 16' deep, which shows that there is water fairly close to the surface. It had good water for years. Keys had put a little hand pump on the well.<sup>80</sup>

3. **Tunnels:** The tunnel, which was about 16' to 18' deep, took off from the well in the orchard and went under the wash. Water in the wash did not affect the tunnel until later years. Eventually the wash eroded down about 3' more and finally started caving into the tunnel. The tunnels were dug either in the early 1900s or late 1890s,

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<sup>77</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

<sup>78</sup>Keys, tapes 1A and 3B.

<sup>79</sup>Keys, tape 3B.

<sup>80</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

very likely by the McHaney brothers. Willis Keys thinks he remembers Bill McHaney say he worked on the tunnel.<sup>81</sup>

The tunnel was used for water storage. About 16' or so down there is bedrock and that is where the water lies. The water seeped in gradually into the tunnel overnight or maybe over the period of two to three days. The ore stamp mill ran on steam and had to have quite a bit of water. Water sources for the stamp mill included the one by the mill, the well in the orchard and the tunnel system, and finally the well that fed the house.<sup>82</sup>

4. **Water tanks and piped distribution of water:** The ranch was covered by a system of pipes and faucets that could be used to irrigate certain areas of the orchard. Often they would be connected with old inner tube tires wrapped around with a piece of bailing wire. Keys could connect this hose to any particular faucet and run water where he wanted it.<sup>83</sup>

Keys also had rows of ditches in between the rows of fruit trees--probably five ditches in between. He grew alfalfa between the trees, watering from particular faucets. He would water one section at a time.<sup>84</sup>

The water from the well in the orchard was stored in the tank on the tower and used for the house.<sup>85</sup>

- G. **Ore milling:** Most of Keys' milling took place in the two-stamp mill at the Wall Street Mine. The sequence of mills over the years was as follows: the five-stamp came first, then the arrastra across the wash, then Keys installed the two-stamp mill at Wall Street mine, then he built the rotary in 1933 or 1934 when he was breaking a bunch of mules and horses, and then he built the Chilean mill in the late 1950s. But generally he milled his gold at the two-stamp mill and also undertook custom milling for people who were mining in the desert. He operated the mill through the 1930s. Keys got \$5 a ton if the mill ran around the clock and the ore was fairly good.<sup>86</sup>

The five-stamp mill was built in 1894 and was on the site when Keys acquired the ranch. He ran it a little bit but it burned wood for fuel and that made it almost unusable because of the

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<sup>81</sup>Keys, tape 3B.

<sup>82</sup>Keys, tape 3B.

<sup>83</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>84</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>85</sup>Keys, tape 2A.

<sup>86</sup>Keys, tape 5B.

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scarcity of wood. Keys gave up on the mill and built the arrastra across the wash, which worked quite well. It was powered by a gasoline engine. It would take many, many hours to put a ton of ore through an arrastra. In the early days if the ore ran \$40 to \$50 per ton, it would be worth working the ton of ore for a couple of days.<sup>87</sup>

The area of the five-stamp mill and the arrastra had quite a bit of equipment on it when it was running. There was an ore car on a track that went over the top of the rock by the five-stamp mill, and back of the boulder to the top of the mill, dumping ore into the grizzly and the pore chute. The track started by where the bee hives were. In later years Keys took that down and built a platform west of it, near where the road is today on a little rise, and ran a tram across to the mill. He used big timbers with a track and an ore car. Customers would drive up to it and unload their ore, push it across with a car to the mill and feed it in from the lower end of the mill rather than bring it in with a chute as before. The tram was built about 1915-16. Later Keys sold part of the mill--the boiler, steam engine, a steam mill called a Tremain Rapid Stamp Steam Mill, and a two-stamp mill--to someone in Pushawalla Canyon. Eventually everything started becoming quite rickety and Keys tore it all down. Later on he sold most of the mill for junk.<sup>88</sup>

The arrastra in the salvage yard area west of the house was built in 1932-33. Originally it was made to break wild mules and horses. One of the poles on the arrastra had a seat on it. The mules were tied to the front log and they were let go in the circle to get them used to the reins and harness.<sup>89</sup>

Willis Keys related the story behind the animal-breaking. A woman's husband passed away in Nevada where they had a big ranch. They had herded several hundred wild horses and mules but she wanted to live in California. To dispose of her place in Nevada she had to sell the mules and horses. The Forest Service told her that it would buy her horses if they were broken. At that point she contracted, who hired two or three men to drive the horses and mules from Nevada to the ranch. There were probably about sixty-five animals and Keys started breaking them. Every time he would get about a dozen of them broken in, he would call the Forest Service to come get the animals. About three or four years later he decided that it would be a good idea to build an arrastra and hook up two or three mules and put them to work. He took the rocks out of the old arrastra by the five-stamp mill across the wash.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Keys, tapes 5A and 5B.

<sup>88</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

<sup>89</sup>Keys, tape 1A.

<sup>90</sup>Keys, tape 5B.

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- H. **Storage field/salvage yard:** The field west of the house was used for storage. There used to be many stacks of lumber there, mining equipment, many gasoline engines, two or three mining hoists, and some ore crushers.<sup>91</sup>

The one-stamp mill: Originally it was set up at the Gold Park Mine up in the canyons near Twentynine Palms which was quite a mining area at one time. Bill Keys owned that mine once, tore down the mill and brought it to the ranch. When the turtle races began at Twentynine Palms, Keys decided to put it back together and use it to demonstrate gold milling.<sup>92</sup>

Wagons: The second one in the row from the left was the one Keys brought in from town and it was his main hauling wagon. If he had to go to Banning in the early days with a team of mules, this was the wagon he would take. It was built by Studebaker before they built cars. When he started breaking animals, Keys bought several wagons in order to give the animals some practice pulling.<sup>93</sup>

Bed frames and stoves: The beds and stoves came from a variety of sources. For example, when Keys tore down the old bunkhouse at the Desert Queen Mine he brought some bed frames and posts back to the ranch. One claim Keys had leased had a big camp with a mess hall and a bunkhouse with quite a few beds in it. When Keys tore it down, he brought salvage materials home, including some of the beds. The old stoves sitting out in the yard also came from different places. Keys would always take them if someone offered them to him.<sup>94</sup>

Cars: Many of them belonged to Willis. For example, he drove the Studebaker for several years. The nearby Plymouth was William Keys' car, which he drove before he got the jeep that now rests west of the kitchen close to the well. The nearby Dodge was one of Willis' sister's and the other Studebaker also belonged to Willis Keys. Nearby is the old Terraplane, or Hudson.<sup>95</sup>

The salvage yard is an astounding collection of all sorts of equipment and spare parts. The different parts came from all over, from old mines, even junk yards. There used to be a man in Yucca Valley who had a junk yard and was moving away but owed Bill Keys a little money. The man said he would sell everything for \$150 to \$200. Keys bought everything and moved it to the ranch. There were about a dozen old cars, auto parts, tools, and so on.

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<sup>91</sup>Keys, tape 5A.

<sup>92</sup>Keys, tape 5A.

<sup>93</sup>Keys, tape 5A.

<sup>94</sup>Keys, tape 5A.

<sup>95</sup>Keys, tape 5A.

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What is at the ranch now is just the leftovers because Keys had junkies come up during World War II who hauled off tons of what Keys had in his salvage yard.<sup>96</sup>

- I. **Cow Camp:** Originally the McHaney brothers settled at the ranch and established it as a mill site. But the McHaney brothers came to the area as cattle men, being the first to bring cattle up in that part of the country. At first their cow camp was right where the ranch complex is today. After the McHanays went into mining they let the cattle business go.

Another small cattle outfit, and later Barker and Shay, ran a lot of cattle in the area. They had property in Big Bear, in the Banning area, and in San Bernardino. The present Cow Camp was their headquarters because of the water there. They dammed the little canyon, producing enough water for their cattle. Stone and concrete water troughs were used.<sup>97</sup>

At Cow Camp there were a couple of houses, a blacksmith shop and several corrals. Keys eventually homesteaded the area, taking Cow Camp with the ranch--a 160-acre homestead. Years back Keys cleared and leveled off the area now called Cow Camp. This was done in order to prove up on the property, a requirement of the homestead act, which stipulated the planting of a certain number of acres of crops. Keys may have raised oats or rye, possibly barley. A friend of his had an old mowing machine down in Morango Valley which Keys would bring to the ranch and hook to a set of burros or mules, or he would do the mowing by hand with a scythe. The harvested grains were stored as feed for animals.<sup>98</sup>

When Keys took the area as a homestead the Barker and Shay outfit was still using it as a cow camp, but Keys fenced the area in and that cut them off from the cow camp. One night, as Keys was diverted, Barker and Shay sent in a few wagons, tore the buildings down at Cow Camp, loaded them along with the blacksmith shop equipment, and left. There is still a chimney standing there which was from one of the cabins torn down by Barker and Shay. In front of the hearth of the fireplace there are pictures of stars pressed into the cement. These stars probably were cow brands.<sup>99</sup>

Keys was never a big-time rancher and never had large herds of cattle. He would take cattle in there to graze but he never had any roundups. Where the dam is now, above the Cow Camp, it was very rocky. Keys made a way to get up in there, and he would take the horses occasionally to let them graze on the grass back up in there. Nothing else ever got up in there.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Keys, tape 5A.

<sup>97</sup>Keys, tape 6A.

<sup>98</sup>Keys, tape 1B.

<sup>99</sup>Keys, tape 6A.

<sup>100</sup>Keys, tape 6A.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. **Early Views:** Photographic holdings at Joshua Tree National Monument are quite extensive for the Desert Queen Ranch. Unfortunately not all are accessioned or numbered, such as the photographs acquired by this author during his research from Willis Keys and Phyllis Keys Meidell. The following is a list of numbered photographs found in the photographic files in the Visitor's Center at Joshua Tree National Monument:

<u>Number</u>	<u>Description</u>
901-3	William Keys by corral fence (1960s?)
973	W rock wall along wash by orchard (1967)
975	SW, S view of house (1967)
1028	Petroglyphs on Keys Ranch (1967)
1674	W side of house without kitchen, quarry stone in yard (1927)
2509	Mr. Dudley (one of the last teachers) (no date)
2512	Keys clearing lake (W of orchard) of sediment for garden (n.d.)
2513	Mr. Dudley and wife, mother and child (n.d.)
2515	four school children (n.d.)
2526	Dudleys (teachers) and 11 school children (n.d.)
2532	view of lake behind dam E of orchard (n.d.)
2622	N view: adobe barn, unattached kitchen, five-stamp mill (1937)
2626	S view: yard, cyanide vat, adobe barn (n.d.)
2630	W. Keys at about age 40 (n.d.)
2640	orchard E of house(n.d.)
2684	S view: orchard with unplanted elevated rows; pig pen and five-stamp mill in distance(1939)
2706-B	adobe barn, cow, fence S of house(1937)
2707	W side of house without kitchen (n.d.)
2836	N view from mountain includes adobe barn (1976)
2838	N view from mountain includes adobe barn (1976)
2885	N view of corral area (1950)
2887	W. Keys at bottom of dry dam (1950)
2893	Fr. Keys by table lamp reading newspaper (1948)
2964	W side of house without kitchen, quarry stone in yard (1927)

The following photographs are unnumbered but can be found at the Joshua Tree National Monument archives:

- (detail of larger photo) two adobe cabins (n.d.)
- (detail) adobe cabin (n.d.)
- house, 2 adobe cabins, adobe barn by wash (n.d.)
- adobe barn with roof and corral fence (n.d.)
- W. Keys, donkey by adobe barn with roof (n.d.)
- adobe barn wall with no roof (n.d.)
- 4 people, W side of house with no kitchen (1913)



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- the Keys, three children S side of house (n.d.)
- outside shower house W of house (n.d.)
- N side of house: second floor entrance overhang, hand rails along elevated walkway, willow fence over boulders, range gauge on boulder (n.d.)
- view showing 3 section corral area with fence in W salvage yard (n.d.)
- Willis Keys and two friends by tent cabin (n.d.)
- Bill McHaney by cabin (in Music Valley?) (n.d.)
- early view of earthen dam E of orchard (n.d.)
- numerous photos of W. Keys building dams (n.d.)
- five-stamp ore mill, redwood cyanide vat (n.d.)
- olla clay pots found on the Keys Ranch (n.d.)

**B. Interviews:** The Archives at Joshua Tree National Monument have a large number of taped and transcribed interviews. Listed below are interviews relevant to the documentation of the Desert Queen Ranch:

**1. Members of the Keys family:**

**a. William Franklin Keys:**

- March 18, 1960; by M. Perkins regarding Keys' knowledge of history of the Desert Queen Mine.
- October 1, 1966.
- October 13, 1966; by Steve Smith.
- December 9, 1966.
- December 16, 1966.
- December 17, 1966. Two times.
- December 23, 1966.
- January 20, 1967.
- February 15, 1967.
- January 20, 1968.
- 1968; a history of the Wall Street Mill site and its the two-stamp mill.

**b. Patricia Keys Garry (daughter):**

- October 4, 1956
- October 11, 1956
- March 3, 1976; by Cheryl Erickson.

**c. Willis Keys (son):**

- March 7, 1975; by Reino Clark and Donald Black while touring Keys Ranch; five manuscripts of transcriptions of unknown number of tapes
- July 8, 1993; by Richard Vidutis while touring the Keys Ranch (five hours of taped interview)

-July 9, 1993; by Richard Vidutis at JOTR Visitor Center (three hours of taped interview)  
-July 16-18, 1993; by Richard Vidutis in North Fork, California (seven hours of taped interviews)

**d. Phyllis Keys Meidell (daughter):**

-August 24, 1993; by Richard Vidutis in Hesperia, California (six hours of taped interviews)  
-August 25, 1993; by Richard Vidutis in Hesperia, California (two hours of taped interviews)

**2. Other interviews:**

- a. Frank and Helen Bagley:** December 12, 1974; by Reino Clark.
- b. Oren Booth:** September 9, 1993; by Richard Vidutis in Twentynine Palms, California (three hours of taped interviews)
- c. Lida Donnell:** October 1, 1975; by Reino Clark.
- d. Mr. Earenfight (former Chief Ranger, JOTR):** January 8, 1982.
- e. Jim Hester:** February 8, 1975; by Reino Clark.
- f. Frank Kiler:** January 13, 1978; by Art Kidwell.
- g. Mrs. Warren Libby Kiler:** May 17, 1978; by Art Kidwell.
- h. Bob Lennon:** April 17, 1975; by Reino Clark.
- i. William H. McHaney:** March 1933; notes of an interview transcribed March 1952 by W. Egbert Schenck.
- j. John W. Meyer:** February 2, 1976; by Reino Clark.
- k. Katherine Randolph:** November 17, 1977; by Art Kidwell.
- l. Phil and Dorothy Smith:** December 13 and 19, 1974; by Reino Clark.
- m. Nelle Godwin Struck:** January 19, 1975; by Reino Clark.
- n. Bob Van Lahr:** January 23, 1975; by Reino Clark

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**D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:**

**1. Donald Black, Park Naturalist:**

- recorded provenance, catalogued, and stored materials from Keys Ranch
- divided the site into 100-foot grid units and the distribution of items within each square was sketched; items moved were plotted on the grid, photographed *in situ* and catalogued
- researched information about the Ranch
- taped interviews with Keys and his family

**2. Mr. Edwards:**

- a former employee at the JOTR; is said to be writing a book on William Keys

**3. Cheryl Erickson, Librarian:**

(Twentynine Palms Branch, San Bernardino County Public Library)

- has files on local history
- has about 100 taped interviews of local history

**4. Pat Flanagan, Park Staff:**

- catalogued some of the many artifacts at the Keys Ranch

**5. R. Holland:**

- Report: "Form Nominating Keys' Ranch to the National Register of Historic Places" on file at JOTR, 1971

**6. E.D. Jahns:**

- Report: "Valuation--Keys' Estate Personal Property" on file at JOTR, 1971

**7. R. Kelley:**

- preliminary map of building locations prepared for Patricia Parker Hickman's book (1977), 1976

**8. Art Kidwell:**

- local historian who has written a book on William Keys' life and court trial;
- has also written two volumes on local pioneer history of Twentynine Palms;
- is close friend of the Keys family

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**9. Bob Michaels:**

-knew William Keys for many years and is knowledgeable about his activities and the Keys family

**10. Joan Wilson:**

-local historian living in Yucca Valley who has published a small number of volumes on local history; she says she has original correspondence from William Keys and photographs from the ranch

**PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

The 1993 HABS recording project at the Desert Queen Ranch in Joshua Tree National Monument was co-sponsored by the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, Thomas Mulhern, chief, Division of Park Historic Preservation, and Joshua Tree National Monument, Dave Moore, superintendent. The project was undertaken by the National Park Service, Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, Robert J. Kapsch, chief; Paul D. Dolinsky, chief, HABS; HABS Architect Joseph D. Balachowski, project leader; and HABS Senior Historian Kim Hoagland. The documentation was produced on the site by supervisory architect Jorge L. Sein; architectural technicians Margaret Ross, Angela Dirks, and Robert Juskevich; and historian Richard Vidutis, who researched and wrote this report. Formal photography was undertaken by Brian Grogan. Rosie Pepito, Division of Cultural Resources, Joshua Tree National Monument, served as park liaison.

ADDENDUM TO  
DESERT QUEEN RANCH  
(WILLIAM F. KEYS RANCH)  
Joshua Tree National Monument  
Twentynine Palms Vicinity  
San Bernardino County  
California

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